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Ollie Dowell of Ollie Dowell Communications Honored at Grace Hill's Women Business Center Wall of Fame Ceremony

ST. LOUIS - After graduating from the University of Missouri Journalism School and spending 20 years as a reporter and anchor in the national news world, Ollie Dowell knew she did not want to be a daily news reporter for the rest of her life. She took a chance and left KMOX Radio to manage public relations for the Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District.

"To an outsider, it must have looked like a real disaster for me. In just less than a year my entire department was eliminated and I was out of a job. But for me it was the greatest transition into public relations that I could ever have had! I had the opportunity from necessity to learn hard core public relations in a crisis situation. I never worked as hard as I did that year, had I been in a subordinate position instead of manager, I might not have been so diligent, but I emerged from the experience with the tools and experience to handle any PR situation that might come up as I transitioned into my own public relations business," said Dowell.

"And what I lacked in knowledge about running a business, the Grace Hill Women's Business Center had at its fingertips," she said. The WBC helped her find funding to take university business classes. "I had financial experience at the Sewer District, dealing with over \$3 million, but I knew nothing about handling money for my own business, dealing with taxes, profit and loss statements and business finances were not in my repertory," she said. Former WBC director Lynette Watson introduced her to business plans, financial fitness classes and computer training. "As a reporter I knew how to use the computer. You just wrote your article and sent it off. I had never worked with Word, Excel, Power Point or Microsoft Office. I had taken some basic classes that were paid for by the MSD, but I needed advanced classes. I took these at Grace Hill; almost for free. I think I paid something like \$20 for the Financial Fitness class. Then they walked me through my business plan, and got me and my business into the St. Louis Enterprise Centers. Now I am located at the Midtown center on Washington Avenue. I call it the 'Theatre District,'" she said.

Dowell said she has Lynette Watson and the WBC to thank for help in filling out the St. Louis Enterprise Center forms. There must have been almost a hundred pages of documents in all. It isn't easy to get into the building where her office is located. It is an incubator program for first-time businesses as well as an office building. The program includes ongoing seminars on how to grow a business and an office business assistant available to new businesses.

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Ollie Dowell Communications is a public relations and media consulting firm. Currently the company represents the Options Program at Fontbonne University and the Missouri

Association of Trial Attorneys. For both clients Dowell writes articles, develops media plans and publicity. She completed a contract to handle publicity for Express Scripts Senior Discount Drug Plan last year. She took on the stock market (new to her) in a contract with Buckingham Asset Management, a job she received through her work as a senior public relations consultant with O'Connor & Partners, an old-line St. Louis PR firm.

Dowell is featured in an article in the February 2005 issue of *Alive* magazine as one of seven successful, single St. Louis women. "With that and the Grace Hill WBC Wall of Fame recognition, my friends say that this is really my time to shine!" she said.

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